

SUBJECT: Rapid Urbanization as an Intelligence Problem

1. It is suggested that the above subject be considered as the focus of a discussion/dinner to be sponsored by the DCI. ()

2. One of the most prominent and visible trends in developing countries is the rapid growth of cities. High birth rates and massive migration from rural to urban areas are causing city populations to expand at rates which far outstrip the abilities of governments or private sectors to provide adequate jobs, food, housing, transportation, clean water and air, public sanitation, and social services for these new urban dwellers. ()

3. A popular belief is that uncontrolled city growth and its accompanying problems are inherently threatening to the political stability of the countries in which it occurs. The argument is that rapid urbanization creates a highly visible, severely discontented mass of people close to the centers of power who are likely to make demands on the society for goods and services that cannot possibly be met. Because traditional values (especially respect for authority) breakdown in the anomic urban setting and rising expectations for improved living conditions are frustrated, the belief is violence and attacks on authority will result almost inevitably. Recent rioting in Tehran, Monrovia, and Istanbul lend credence to this view. ()

4. Nonetheless, this perception of the consequences of rapid urbanization appears to be too simplistic. Conditions in many large cities have deteriorated over the last decade far beyond the point at which Western observers might have expected an explosive reaction, yet the cities remain outwardly calm and pose no obvious threat to political stability. One conclusion that can be reached, therefore, is that the relationship between rapid urbanization and the likelihood of significant political consequences is extremely complex and that the key to treating rapid urbanization as a ^{valid} ~~solid~~ topic of intelligence inquiry is to search out and understand those intervening social, economic, or political factors that can convert exploding urban growth into the kinds of problems that threaten political stability and demand the attention of US policymakers. ()

5. Some of the areas in which we could improve our ability to understand the impact of urban growth on the national economies, social structures, and political stability of developing countries are the following:

- a. To what degree and in what ways do the discontent and frustrations of non-elite city dwellers result in political and economic demands that create problems for the government? What are the indicators of impending crisis?
- b. What are the economic consequences of major populations shifts from the countryside to the city

in terms of food production, job creation, investment needs, wage and price patterns, and the like? When and in what way do these consequences cause major problems for governments?

c. How do cultural factors affect the likelihood that certain common results of urbanization, such as increasing rates of violence and criminal activity, will attain political significance?

d. What are the capabilities governments need to cope with successfully the pressures of urbanization and how can the potential effectiveness or ineffectiveness of government responses be measured?